

Letter to Harris Taylor, February 7, 1917, with transcript

Feb. 7, 1917. Dr. Harris Taylor, Institution for the Improved Instruction of Deaf Mutes, Lexington Ave., 67th., and 68th. Sts., New York City, N.Y., My dear Dr. Taylor:—

Your favor of Jan. 29th., enclosing a copy of your open letter addressed to the president of the Association and the president of the Convention urging the union has been received.

Anything which you might suggest touching the interests of our Association will always merit and receive most careful consideration. As your proposition involves a very radical change in the present statu quo of the Association I feel that any conclusion otherwise than what should come from a free viva voce discussion of the same at some regular or specially called meeting of the Board might be considered unauthoritative if not indeed improper. However should the Executive Committee with the assent and approval of Dr. Bell think it wise to adopt a different course of procedure I think that the majority of the members of the Board would give assent.

Being very intimately familiar with the history, aims and policy of the Association almost from the day of its organization I feel that the consolidation in the manner proposed by you should not be adopted without the most careful survey and the positive establishment of the fact that such a combination would inure to the increased success and value of both the Association and Convention along their respective spheres of activity.

One of the purposes of the Association as expressed by its constitution is to co-operate with the Convention. It strikes me that this co-operation might be carried on so as substantially to achieve the end which you have in mind. In any event would it not be wise to carry co-operation to the extreme limit before resorting to incorporation.

The application of the rules of the Convention as adopted at the Flint meeting must be considerably relaxed as the first president and the present president of the Association

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were refused membership to the Convention on the ground that they were not instructors of the deaf, although Dr. Bell had all his life devoted his exceptional ability so generously to the cause of the education of the deaf and your humble servant had at the time mentioned the supervision and examination of all the schools for the deaf in New York State under the authority of the State Board of Charities. Possibly the rule just referred to has since received more generous interpretation as the t h en president of the Association, Dr. Phillip G. Gillett, was permitted to retain his connection with the Convention, although he had resigned from the principalship of the Jacksonville School.

I should think, therefore, that before there is a corporate combination of the Association and Convention the Convention membership should be made liberal enough to include all persons desirous of furthering the educational interests of the deaf and that for a time the Association and the Convention should co-operate in such a manner as to demonstrate that incorporation would further the welfare of those whose interests the members of both organizations have so much at heart.

This note is not intended for publication.

With kind regards, I am Sincerely yours, EL:WGL